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AUTHOR Edwards, Lisa M.; Price, Gary E.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between levels of hope and perceived parental authority style in college students (N=251). It was expected that there would be a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and students' levels of hope. It was also expected that there would be a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and levels of hope. Results reveal that authoritative parenting, with its high but balanced levels of nurturance, communication, control, and maturity demands, appears to consistently be related to positive outcomes in children as well as adolescents. While this study does not indicate causality or the direction of the relationship between hope and authoritative parenting, it serves as a springboard for future studies of parenting style and positive outcomes such as hope. (Contains 16 references and 1 table.) (GCP)

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The Relationship between Perceived Parenting Style and Hope in College Students

by

Lisa M. Edwards
Gary E. Price

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The Relationship Between Perceived Parenting Style and Hope in College Students

For decades researchers have investigated parenting styles and other family variables in an effort to better understand what factors contribute to both negative and positive outcomes in children, adolescents, and adults. In one of the most comprehensive longitudinal studies investigating family socialization, Baumrind (1967, 1971) identified parents who she classified as authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative. Authoritative parents were those parents who balanced high maturity demands and control with high nurturance and clear communication. Authoritative parents exhibited consistent but flexible parenting, and fostered a sense of self-reliance and autonomy in their children.

Later studies have supported the notion that authoritative parenting is associated with positive outcomes in children and adolescents. Several studies have indicated a positive relationship between authoritative parenting style and children's self-esteem (Buri, 1989; Buri, Louiselle, Misukani & Mueller, 1988; Coopersmith, 1967; Gecas, 1971; Peterson, Southworth, & Peters, 1983) as well as self-actualization (Dominguez & Carton, 1997). Academic performance also appears to be related to authoritative parenting, with children of authoritative parents demonstrating more self-regulation and competence, and higher school grades and scores on standardized tests (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Weiss & Schwarz, 1996).

Hope

Snyder's (1994b) conceptualization of hope suggests a model comprised of three cognitive components: goals, agency, and pathways. Goals are considered the targets or endpoints of mental action sequences, and as such form the anchor of hope theory (Snyder, Ilardi, Michael, & Cheavens, 2000). Pathways, which are the routes towards desired goals, are

necessary to attain goals and navigate around obstacles. Finally, agency is considered the determination and energy necessary to begin and sustain movement towards goals. Pathways and agency are positively related, but describe separate components, each of which is not sufficient alone to define hope.

Several positive correlates have been associated with hope scores in children and adults, including optimism, control perceptions, problem-solving, positive affect, self-actualization, and self-esteem (Sumerlin, 1997; Snyder et al., 1991). Children with high hope tend to have lower levels of depression and higher self-perceptions of athletic ability, physical appearance, social acceptance, and scholastic competence (Snyder et al., 1997). Hope appears to be related to health outcomes, with studies demonstrating that higher hope is associated with lower risk for depression and a more adaptive coping style (Elliott, Witty, Herrick, & Hoffman, 1991).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between levels of hope and perceived parental authority style in college students. It was expected that there would be a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and students' levels of hope. It was also expected that there would be a negative relationship between authoritarian parenting and levels of hope.

Method

Procedure

Two-hundred and fifty one undergraduate and graduate students from a large, mid-western university were solicited for participation in this study. A total of 200 surveys, from subjects who had grown up in intact families (with both a mother and father in the home), were included in the final analyses.

Materials

Sociodemographic Survey.

A sociodemographic form was developed that included items requesting participants to identify their age, gender, ethnic background, religious affiliation, number of family members that lived in the home while they were growing up, and marital status.

Hope Scale

The Hope Scale was selected as a measure to assess levels of hope in each of the participants. Also known as the Goals Scale, this measure was originally developed by Snyder and colleagues (1991). The Hope Scale is a self-report measure of twelve items. Consistent with the hope theory developed by Snyder and his colleagues, the Hope Scale provides an agency subscale score, a pathways subscale score, and a total hope score.

Various studies were reported by Snyder et al. (1991) that attested to the acceptable psychometric properties of the Hope Scale. For the total scale, internal consistency alphas ranged from .74 to .84. Test-retest reliability, which was measured in four samples, was reported at .85 over a 3-week interval, .73 over an 8-week interval, and .76 and .82 over 10-week intervals.

Parental Authority Questionnaire

The Parental Authority Questionnaire was chosen as a measure of perceived parenting style. Items in this questionnaire were constructed to measure the permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritativeness of mothers and fathers as appraised by their sons or daughters. Scores can range from 10 to 50 on each variable, with higher scores representing greater perceived levels of the parenting style measured.

Buri (1991) reports several studies that provide support for the adequate psychometric properties of the Parental Authority Questionnaire. For evidence of internal reliability, a study of

the PAQ yielded the following Cronbach alpha values for each of the six scales: .75 for mother's permissiveness, .85 for mother's authoritarianism, .82 for mother's authoritativeness, .74 for father's permissiveness, .87 for father's authoritarianism, and .85 for father's authoritativeness.

Results

A Pearson correlation matrix was computed in order to examine the empirical correlations between hope and authoritarian mothers, authoritarian fathers, authoritative mothers, and authoritative fathers (see Table 1). A significant positive correlation was found between hope and authoritative fathers ($r = .17$, $p = .016$) and between hope and authoritative mothers ($r = .26$, $p = .0005$). Results also indicated that there was a significant negative correlation between hope and authoritarian fathers ($r = -.20$, $p = .005$), as well as between hope and authoritarian mothers ($r = -.22$, $p = .002$).

Discussion

While this study is the first investigation of hope and parenting style, the results obtained were similar to those of several other studies that have associated authoritative parenting with positive variables. Authoritative parenting, with its high but balanced levels of nurturance, communication, control, and maturity demands, appears to consistently be related to positive outcomes in children as well as adolescents. Indeed, Baumrind (1967) suggested that "maturity demands…should encourage the child to set high but obtainable goals for himself" (p. 60). While this study does not indicate causality or the direction of the relationship between hope and authoritative parenting, it serves as a springboard for future studies of parenting style and positive outcomes such as hope. If it is established that hope can be targeted through parenting prevention and intervention programs, psychologists may have another vehicle through which to support and help parents as they face the challenging task of raising competent children.

Table 1

Intercorrelations Between Hope and Parenting Style Variables

	HOPE	TAR-F	TAR-M	TAT-F	TAT-M	PER-F
HOPE	1.000					
TAR-F	-.20**					
TAR-M	-.22**	.59**				
TAT-F	.17*	-.43**	-.09			
TAT-M	.26**	-.12	-.33**	.50**		
PER-F	.11	-.53**	-.16*	.20**	-.08	
PER-M	.06	-.10	-.31**	-.14*	-.01	.50**

Note: TAR-F = father's authoritarianism; TAR-M = mother's authoritarianism;
TAT-F = father's authoritativeness; TAT-M = mother's authoritativeness;
PER-F = father's permissiveness; PER-M = mother's permissiveness.

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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